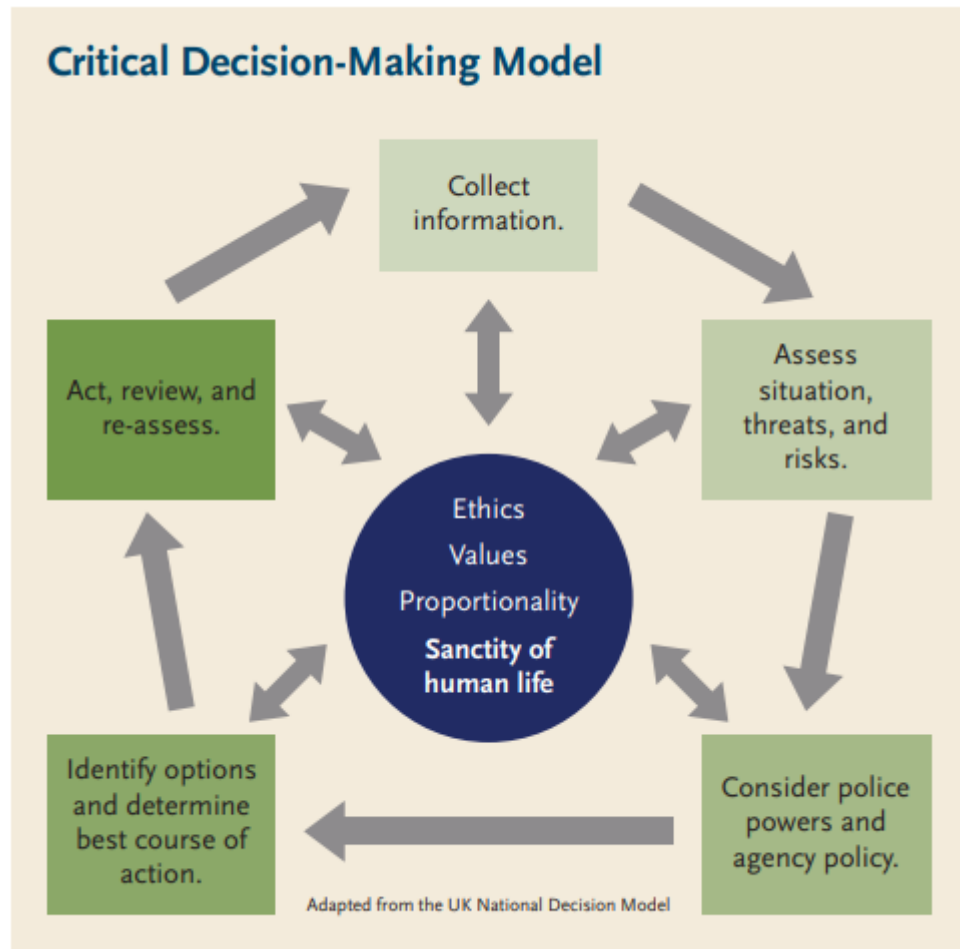


Critical Decision-Making Model



Step 1 Collect Information

The logical first step in the process is for officers to gather information and intelligence, a process that begins as officers are heading toward the incident. During this step, officers ask themselves and others, including Dispatch personnel, a series of key questions.

It is important to remember that while the collection of information represents the beginning of the process, it is not a one-time activity in the CDM. Information gathering is ongoing, and new information is collected continuously to help inform the other steps in the process.

Officers should ask themselves ...

- What do I know so far about this incident?
- What else do I need to know?
- What do my training and experience tell me about this type of incident?

Officers should query others (dispatchers, fellow officers, supervisors, computer networks) ...

- What more can you tell me about *this incident*? For example:
 - Circumstances that prompted the call
 - Individuals on the scene, the physical environment
 - Presence of weapons
 - Presence of bystanders, including children
 - Mental health/substance abuse issues
- What more can you tell me about *previous incidents* involving this location or the person or persons who are involved?

Step 2 Assess Situation, Threat and Risks

This step typically begins as officers are responding to the incident and are evaluating what they are being told by dispatchers or others. That is the time when officers begin considering “what if?” scenarios in their minds. The assessment step shifts into high gear as officers arrive on scene and can visually begin to gauge threats and risks. During this step:

Officers should ask themselves ...

- Do I need to take immediate action?
- What is the threat/risk, if any?
- What more information do I need?
- What could go wrong, and how serious would the harm be?
- Am I trained and equipped to handle this situation by myself?
- Does this situation require a supervisory response to provide additional planning and coordination?
- Do I need additional police resources (e.g., other less-lethal weaponry, specialized equipment, other units, officers specially trained in mental health issues)?
- Is this a situation for the police to handle alone, or should other agencies/resources be involved?

Officers should also request that others ...

- Provide additional information, as needed.
- Respond to the scene, as needed.
- Provide the additional equipment or resources needed.

Step 3

Consider Police Powers and Agency Policy

This step represents an important self-check of officers' authority to take action. In addition to considering their legal authority to act, officers must think about what their agencies' policies say about the situation.

For example, a police agency's policy may place restrictions, beyond what is allowed by law, on shooting at vehicles, engaging in vehicle or foot pursuits, or using less-lethal options in certain situations. These internal policies must be considered at this stage, before specific options are identified and actions taken. During this step:

Officers should ask themselves ...

- What legal powers do I have to take action?
- What agency policies control my response?
- Are there other issues I should think about? (e.g., jurisdictional or mutual aid considerations—Am I authorized to take action *here*?)

Step 4

Identify Options and Determine the Best Course of Action

Using the information and assessment from earlier steps, officers now begin to narrow their options and determine the best course of action. Again, part of this step is to determine if the officers have enough information and resources, and a compelling interest, to act right away. Or should they hold off, possibly to get even more information and resources? During this step:

Officers should ask themselves ...

- What am I trying to achieve?
- What options are open to me?
- What contingencies must I consider if I choose a particular option?
- How might the subject respond if I choose a particular option?
- Is there a compelling reason to act now, or can I wait?
- Do I have the information and resources I need to act now?

Then, officers should select the best course of action, keeping in mind ...

- The greatest likelihood of success and the least potential for harm.
- How proportional the response will be, given the risk/threats posed by the subject and the totality of the circumstances.
- The safety of the public, officer safety, and the sanctity of all life.

Step 5

Act, Review and Reassess

In this step, officers execute the plan, evaluate the impact, and determine what more, if anything, they need to do.

Officers should execute the plan, then ask themselves ...

- Did I achieve the desired outcome?
- Is there anything more I need to consider?
- What lessons did I learn?